

United States Senate Committee on
**AGRICULTURE
NUTRITION
& FORESTRY**

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman

Opportunities for Veterans

The Agricultural Act of 2014

The 2014 Farm Bill makes landmark strides in creating economic opportunities for veterans in agriculture. Veterans are given new opportunities in the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, and the bill establishes a Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison position at the Department of Agriculture that reaches out to veterans interested in agriculture. These new initiatives would set aside funds for veterans in conservation programs and dedicate funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assist veterans who want to own and operate farms or work in agriculture.

Additional Assistance for Veteran Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

The bill dedicates \$100 million to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and, for the first time, requires the Department of Agriculture to make veterans a priority. This is a competitive grant program that funds education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for individuals who are new to farming. It also facilitates apprenticeship programs and “land link” programs that connect retiring farmers with new farmers. Veterans are also prioritized for Value-Added Producer Grants.

Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison

The bill requires the Secretary to establish a Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison within the USDA, a position that educates returning veterans about farming and connects them with beginning farmer training programs. This individual will help veterans understand the eligibility requirements for participation in farm programs and will be an advocate for veterans at the Department of Agriculture.

Outreach and Technical Assistance for Veteran Farmers

The bill adds veterans to Section 2501 of the Farm Bill, which helps targeted groups own and operate farms. This program supports a range of outreach and assistance activities, including: farm management, financial management, marketing, and will help veterans access USDA programs.

Conservation Program Opportunities for Veterans

The bill gives priority to producers who are veterans and eligible to participate in the set-aside for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), administered by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. Producers eligible for EQIP, including veteran farmers and ranchers, can also receive advance payments for up to 90 days to implement conservation practices on their farms.